

# CHARACTER EDUCATION OF A LEADER IN THE DANCE THEATRE “THE MERCY OF DURGA DEVI”

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## ABSTRACT

The occurrence of moral degradation such as corruption, murder, divorce, etc. that Indonesia is currently facing is the essence of character education in Indonesia. Apart from character education, character education can also be implemented through performing arts in the form of dance theatre. Dance theatre which always contains moral values is certainly very beneficial for the audience which can be measured from character values. This article aims to find the figurative languages used in dialogue for a leader contained in the dance theatre *The Mercy of Durga Devi* as well as the values of national character and moral values contained in the dance theatre. The method used is a qualitative descriptive method, which includes three stages, namely (1) data collection stage, (2) data analysis stage, and (3) presentation of analysis results stage. The research results show that the dance theatre *The Mercy of Durga Devi*, which is adapted from *Srimad Bhagavatam*, contains cynicism, sarcasm and assonance which makes the conveying of the character's values easier and more beautiful to understand. The national character values referred to are religion, tolerance, responsibility, and love of peace, which gives the message that every leader must implement the Vedas, doing *yadnya*, and give charity to his people.

**Keywords:** *Moral values, character values, dance theatre, Srimad Bhagavatam*

## INTRODUCTION

The occurrence of moral degradation such as corruption, murder, divorce, etc. that Indonesia is currently facing is the essence of character education in Indonesia. Apart from character education, character education can also be implemented through performing arts in the form of dance theatre. Dance theatre which always contains moral values is of course very beneficial for the audience which can be measured from character values (Gunawan, I., & Sulistyoningrum, 2016). Character education is a very significant need today. Character education is an effort to realize the mandate of Pancasila and the opening of the 1945 Constitution which is motivated by the reality of current national problems, such as shifting ethical values in national and state life (Yulianti, 2019). Moving on from the need for character education in Indonesia, the role of a work of art with the theme of character education is very essential in representing this problem.

The English dance theatre entitled *The Mercy of Durga Devi* contains character values and moral values in it. This dance theatre is adapted from one of the stories in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* book, namely the part in chapter four of the tenth canto which tells the story of Durga Devi who saved Devaki's son from the cruelty and atrocity of King Kamsa. This dance theatre uses language styles in its dialogue.

Apart from exploring the character and moral values contained in this theatrical work of art, it is also discussed how leadership values emerge in *The Mercy of Durga Devi*. A good leader according to Hinduism is a leader who always strives for people's welfare (*suka nikang rat*) and avoids personal pleasure (*agawe sukaning len*). This is confirmed in Arthasastra that the happiness of the leader lies on the happiness of his people. There are many concepts of leadership in Hinduism, one of them is Asta Brata. Asta Brata is implied in Kakawin Ramayana (XXIV, 51-61) when Rama gives advice to Wibhisana. Asta Brata is actually a thought from

Manawa Dharmasastra VII which was composed in a beautiful way so that it became popular in Indonesia. Literally, Asta means eight and Brata means behavior. In this term, behavior refers to deities. A leader is required to have the advantages of the community he leads. The leader must be able to show the bright and shining sainthood, have virtue and power. The figure of King Kamsa in this theatrical art performance ends by showing the policies of a king as a leader. The good leader figure of King Kamsa is implied by how a king does not prioritize his personal matters, namely in this theatre it is shown by King Kamsa apologizing for all his mistakes to Devaki and Vasudeva.

According to Albertine (2005: 51), figurative language is language that originates from language that is usually used in a traditional and literal style to describe people or objects. By using figurative languages, imaginative presentations become fresher and more impressive.

The dance theatre art work with the play Durga Devi gives a gift by saving Devaki and Vasudeva's son aims to present a work of art based on local wisdom, with very deep eastern cultural values, and dialogue with English to present a work of art that has a universal perspective with a paradigm which can be universally accepted by people in various parts of the world.

Dance theatre that presents character education values is to be developed to support national education goals in Indonesia. The story about Durga Devi giving gifts to Devaki and Vasudeva is not as popular as the epic story Ramayana or Mahabharata for the world community, because the Srimad Bhagavatam book which contains this story is a higher holy book than the Bhagavad Gita, and this holy book describes *lila-lila* (holy journey) of the Gods. The character values contained therein are performed in English dance theatres of art, which in these works of art are accompanied by MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) in the performance.

This work is potential to be useful for society, especially artists who are involved in character education, English, drama, dance and music, to serve as a source/inspiration for creating works which combine elements of drama, dance, music, and English. Based on the description above, there are two main topics discussed in this article, including the following.

1. What figurative languages are used in the dialogue for a leader contained in the dance theatre The Mercy of Durga Devi?
2. What character values and moral values are contained in the dance theatre?



Picture 1: The Performance of the Dance Theatre: Durga Dev advised Kamsa  
(Personal documentation: Dewi Yulianti, 2023)

## METHODS

The method used was a qualitative descriptive method, which includes three stages, namely (1) data collection stage, (2) data analysis stage, and (3) presentation of analysis results stage. The qualitative descriptive method is a research approach used to describe and explain phenomena in depth. This method focused more on qualitative understanding rather than measuring or calculating variables statistically. In the qualitative descriptive method, researchers used qualitative data such as text, interview transcripts, images, or field notes to understand the context, meaning, and perspectives that emerge from participants or data sources (Yusanto, 2020). The qualitative descriptive method focused on describing and interpreting qualitative data without measuring or calculating variables statistically (Adlini., et al. 2022). The qualitative descriptive method includes three main stages, namely the data collection stage, the data analysis stage, and the analysis results presentation stage.

## DISCUSSION

The Mercy of Durga Devi is an English dance theatre that uses figurative languages in its dialogue that contain national character values and moral values. This dance theatre is adapted from one of the stories in the Srimad Bhagavatam book, namely the part in chapter four of the tenth canto entitled The Atrocities of Kamsa which tells the story of Durga Devi who saved Devaki's son from the cruelty of Kamsa (Prabhupada, 1993).

This artistic theatre work is a medium for developing character education. This work is also related to teaching because the work created is related to theories and concepts of dance theatre as well as relevant grammatical rules in English.

### **Figurative Languages in Dance Theatre *The Mercy of Durga Devi*.**

Before discussing the figurative language used in the dance theatre *The Mercy of Durga Devi*, it is very important to explain the synopsis of the dance theatre.

It is said that after Vasudeva put the iron handcuffs back on as before, all the prison doors were closed again by the power of Yogamaya, then Yogamaya made a crying sound like a newborn baby. The sound of crying woke up the prison guards, and they rushed to tell Kamsa that Devaki had given birth. Hearing this news, Kamsa rushed to the delivery room. Even though Devaki had begged the child not to be killed, the demon snatched the child from Devaki's hands and then slammed the child onto a rock. However, unfortunately for Kamsa, the newborn child slipped from his grasp, flew up above his head and changed into the eight-armed Durga. Durga then said to Kamsa, "The enemy you have in mind has been born elsewhere. So, your plan to torture children will prove to be a failure."



Picture 1: The Performance of the Dance Theatre: Kamsa get furious to Devaki & Vasudeva  
(Personal documentation: Dewi Yulianti, 2023)

According to the prophecy, the eighth son of Devaki will kill Kamsa. When Kamsa saw that the eighth child was a girl and heard that his enemy had been born elsewhere, he was stunned. He then decided to release Devaki and Vasudeva, and confessed his mistake before them. Kamsa knelt for forgiveness at the feet of Devaki and Vasudeva and tried to convince them that they should not grieve over his act of killing their children because the whole incident was predestined.

Devaki and Vasudeva immediately forgave all of Kamsa's atrocities because they were naturally very pious beings. Kamsa then returned to his residence after seeing that his sister and brother-in-law were happy. However, after the night had passed, Kamsa summoned his ministers and told them everything that had happened. His ministers, all of whom were asuras, recommended to Kamsa that all children born within the last ten days in the villages in Kamsa's kingdom should be killed, because Kamsa's enemy had been born somewhere. Although the gods always fear Kamsa, they must not be treated lightly; they are enemies, so Kamsa must try as much as possible to get rid of their existence (Prabhupada, 2011)

In the dance theatre dialogue of The Mercy Durga Devi, the types of figurative languages are cynicism, sarcasm and assonance. An explanation of each figurative language is as follows.

### 1. Cynicism

Cynicism is a figurative language that is cynical and in other words is irony which is rougher in nature Keraf (2002: 143).

In this dance theatre, cynicism is found in the dialogue "**Hi fallen souls**, you will never understand the significance of Mercy, Cleanliness, Austerity, and honesty, until you surrender to God". Fallen souls or fallen souls is a harsh and cynical statement. This speech was delivered by Durga Devi as a warning to souls who have made several mistakes in the material world.

### 2. Sarcasm

Keraf (2002:143) explains that sarcasm is a harsher reference than cynicism. It is a style of language that contains bitterness and bitter reproach.

Sarcasm is used in dialogue as follows. "O Kamsa, **you fool**, what will be the use of killing me? The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who has been your enemy from the very beginning and who will certainly kill you, has already taken His birth somewhere else. Therefore, do not unnecessarily kill other children. And now, Kamsa, you must ask forgiveness to Devaki and Vasudeva, and stop feeding your greed!". *You fool* is a bitter statement that was conveyed by Durga Devi to King Kamsa, who was supposed to be someone who was wise and intelligent as a king. He was said to be so because of his stupidity because he had been deceived by Vasudeva, whose son Krishna had been exchanged for a daughter.



Picture 1: The Performance of the Dance Theatre: Durga Devi's mercy to every soul.  
(Personal documentation: Dewi Yulianti, 2023)

### 3. Assonance

According to Keraf (2002:130), assonance is a figurative language that takes the form of repeating the same vowel sounds. Usually used for jewelry or to obtain an emphasis effect or just for beauty.

The assonance found in the dance theatre *The Mercy of Durga Devi* is a fragment of the dialogue "... **Austerity, and honesty**, until you surrender to God". The choice of these two vocabularies is to explain honesty and simplicity. Apart from that, it also shows the beauty of the words spoken by Durga Devi.

### **3.2 National Character Values and Moral Values of The Mercy of Durga Devi Dance Theatre**

National character values are collection of norms, ethics and attitudes that characterize a nation or community group (Daniah, 2019). National character values reflect the identity, beliefs and principles held by society as the foundation for acting, interacting and living together. These values form culture, morality and ethics that guide individuals in making decisions and behaving in society (Ningsih, 2022).

The national character values contained in the dance theatre work *The Mercy of Durga Devi* are religious, creative, tolerant, responsible, peaceful and independent. Based on the values above, it can be described as follows.

#### a. Religious Values

The religious values in the dance theatre *The Mercy of Durga Devi* reflect scenes of worship, worship or religious rituals to express spiritual values and human relationships with God. Dance theatre can be an effort to explore spiritual meaning or search for the truth and wisdom of life. The religious values contained in it can provide a rich and deep nuance of respect or expression of gratitude to God, which is depicted in the dance theatre work *The Mercy of Durga Devi*.

#### b. Tolerance Value

The value of tolerance in this dance theatre is that Durga Devi gives King Kamsa the opportunity to improve himself and change his evil ways. The value of tolerance in this story is seen when Durga Devi gives a second chance to King Kamsa, showing the importance of giving opportunities to correct mistakes and change for the better.

#### c. Value of Responsibility

The value of responsibility in dance theatre can be seen in the decisions taken by the characters in this story. Vasudeva and Devaki responsibly handed over their son, Sri Krishna, to a safe place to save his life from King Kamsa. Vasudeva and Devaki had a great responsibility as parents to protect and care for their son, Lord Krishna. Even though they face many obstacles and threats, they try to protect their child with courage and love.

#### d. The Value of Love and Peace

The value of loving peace in the dance theatre *The Mercy of Durga Devi* reflects the importance of seeking peace, brotherhood and tolerance in the face of conflict and difficulty.

In this dance theatre, Kamsa knelt for forgiveness at the feet of Devaki and Vasudeva and tried to convince them that they should not be sad for his actions in killing their children because all these events were predestined. Devaki and Vasudeva immediately forgave all of Kamsa's atrocities because they were naturally very pious beings.

Based on the character values above, moral values which are a powerful means of inspiring and teaching the audience can be explained. Moral values are a set of principles, norms or ethical standards that serve as guidelines for individuals or groups in assessing actions and behavior as right or wrong, good or bad, according to the values believed to be true or good (Bisri, M. H., & Asmoro, 2019).

The moral values in the dance theatre *The Mercy of Durga Devi* reflect the teachings and moral messages conveyed through dance theatre works. Dance theatre arts have great potential to teach positive values and deepen understanding of ethics, goodness and morality to the audience. Some of the moral values contained in the dance theatre *The Mercy of Durga Devi* are (1) Kindness and Compassion: Even though King Kamsa was an evil and cruel person, when Durga Devi rebuked him, King Kamsa apologized to Vasudeva and Devaki. Vasudeva and Devaki gave their child genuine love and care, despite facing many obstacles and difficulties; (2) Tolerance and Openness: Vasudeva and Devaki accepted fate and made peace with difficult situations, demonstrating the value of tolerance and openness to the trial's life threw at them; (3) Protection of Truth: Durga Devi stood on the side of truth and tried to stop the evil King Kamsa. This moral value shows the importance of fighting to protect truth and oppose injustice.



Picture 1: The Performance of the Dance Theatre: The closing choreography.  
(Personal documentation: Dewi Yulianti, 2023)

## CONCLUSION

*The Mercy of Durga Devi* is an English dance theatre that uses linguistic style in its dialogue and contains national character values and moral values in it. This dance theatre is taken from one of the stories in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* book, namely the part in chapter four of the tenth chapter which tells the story of Durga Devi who saved Devaki's son from the cruelty of Kamsa.

In the dance theatre dialogue of *The Mercy Durga Devi*, the types of figurative languages are cynicism, sarcasm and assonance.

The values of national character contained in the dance theatre work *The Mercy of Durga Devi* are religion, tolerance, responsibility, love of peace, and independence. The dance theatre also contains moral values in it, namely kindness and compassion, tolerance and openness, and protection of the truth.

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